

For immediate release
February 3, 2006

RIO GRANDE ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES, FLOOD CONTROL LEVEES, CHANNEL MAINTENANCE ON AGENDA FOR FEB. 15 PUBLIC MEETING

The United States Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission (USIBWC) announces a public meeting of the Rio Grande Citizens' Forum at 6:30 p.m. on February 15 at USIBWC Headquarters, 4171 N. Mesa Street, Building C, El Paso, Texas. The purpose of the forum is to promote the exchange of information between the USIBWC and the community about the Commission's projects and related issues in the area. USIBWC staff will provide updates on its Rio Grande projects, focusing on the El Paso-Las Cruces region.

Agency Environmental Protection Specialist Daniel Borunda will discuss the USIBWC's Rio Grande Canalization Project Environmental Impact Statement, a study of various alternatives to raise and rehabilitate USIBWC flood control levees in the region while providing environmental enhancements. In August 2004, at the request of various organizations and elected officials, the USIBWC agreed to delay the selection of an alternative. Since then, the USIBWC has been coordinating with various stakeholders to develop a strategy that allows the USIBWC to carry out its mission while implementing environmental restoration projects in a manner that protects water users. The Rio Grande Canalization Project covers 106 river miles from El Paso north to Percha Dam, New Mexico.

USIBWC Civil Engineer Rong Kuo will present information regarding a new model of flood flows through the Rio Grande Canalization Project using FLO-2D software. The model routes floodwaves through the project for six different flood flows (2-, 5-, 10-, 25-, 50-, and 100-year flood events). The report analyzed and determined floodplain inundation, maximum water surface elevation, levee inundation, and levee overtopping. As a result of this study, the USIBWC is taking steps to implement corrective actions in the Canutillo area, including designing a floodwall on the east side of the river and raising a portion of the west levee.

In other flood control work, the agency is currently coordinating with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) on Rio Grande Canalization and Rectification Project levee certification, covering nearly 200 river miles in Southern New Mexico and West Texas. According to various federal studies in recent years, Rio Grande flood control levees in some areas could be overtopped by the 100-year flood event, making them non-certifiable. USIBWC hydraulic engineer Billy Finn will give an update on the FEMA project, identify non-certifiable levee segments within the Rio Grande Canalization and Rectification Projects, and describe the typical FEMA process for developing Digital Flood Insurance Rate Maps .

USIBWC Operations and Maintenance Division Acting Chief Cesar Boisselier will give an update on current Rio Grande channel maintenance activities as part of the five-year

maintenance plan for the Canalization Project. Maintenance activities such as sediment removal, river bank stabilization, and arroyo realignment are being undertaken during the current non-irrigation season near Mesilla Dam, American Dam, Trujillo Arroyo, and Canutillo Bridge. The U.S. and Mexican Sections of the Commission are also discussing river channel maintenance needs in the Rectification Project, covering the Rio Grande from El Paso-Ciudad Juarez to Fort Quitman, Texas. The two Sections have inspected the channel and observed the need to remove sediment, especially in areas where arroyos enter the river. In another project, the USIBWC is completing protection works for the Picacho Flume, a type of bridge that conveys irrigation water across the Rio Grande upstream of Las Cruces. Work to shore up the piers on the 80-year old structure is expected to be completed at the end of February.

The Rio Grande Citizens' Forum was established by the USIBWC in 1999 to facilitate the exchange of information regarding USIBWC activities on the Rio Grande between Percha Dam, NM and Fort Quitman, TX. It is designed to bring together community members, enabling the early and continued two-way flow of information, concerns, values, and needs between USIBWC and the general public, environmentalists, irrigation districts, municipalities, and others interested in the river. The International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico, is responsible for applying the boundary and water treaties between the two countries and settling differences that arise in their application.

A complete meeting agenda appears below.

For more information:

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RIO GRANDE CITIZENS' FORUM

Wednesday, February 15, 2006

6:30 - 8:30 P.M.

International Boundary and Water Commission
4171 N. Mesa Street, The Commons, Building C
El Paso, TX

Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions - Ken Rakestraw, Acting Principal Engineer, USIBWC
- Rio Grande Canalization Project
 - FLO 2-D Model Development below Caballo Dam, Canutillo Floodwall and Levee Design - Rong Kuo, Civil Engineer, USIBWC
 - Status of Rio Grande Canalization Project EIS and Programmatic EIS - Daniel Borunda, Environmental Protection Specialist, USIBWC
- Flood Control Levee Certification - Billy Finn, Hydraulic Engineer, USIBWC
- Rio Grande Channel Maintenance - Cesar Boisselier, Acting Chief, Operations and Maintenance Division, USIBWC
 - Canalization Project Maintenance
 - Proposed Work in the Rectification Project
 - Picacho Flume Protection Works
- Lower Rio Grande (Texas) Conservation Easements - Carlos Peña, Acting Chief, Environmental Management Division, USIBWC
- Public Comment
- Board Discussion, Suggested Future Agenda Items

Note: The next meeting of the Rio Grande Citizens' Forum will be May 11 in Las Cruces.

If you have a disability that you wish to self-identify confidentially that requires accommodation, please advise us ahead of time. For more information, call 915-832-4706 or e-mail sallyspener@ibwc.state.gov.